

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4029
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LOME
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AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ACCRA 4715

LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, EAGR, EAID, SHUM, GH
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG

1. SUMMARY: IN A LONG CONVERSATION ON JUNE 6, HEAD OF
STATE ACHEAMPONG TOLD ME THAT:
-- US/GHANAIAAN RELATIONS ARE VERY GOOD: HE PARTICULARLY
APPRECIATES OUR MILITARY TRAINING AND FOOD AID PROGRAMS.
-- RECENT PRESS ATTACKS ON THE US DO NOT REPRESENT GOG
POLICY.
--SOME POLITICAL PRISONERS HAVE ALREADY BEEN RELEASED;
OTHERS WILL BE, TOO, AS THEIR CASES ARE REVIEWED.
--GHANA WILL CONTINUE TO MOVE ALONG HIS TIMETABLE
TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL RULE BY JUNE 1979.
-- THE GOG IS TRYING TO DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S SEVERE
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.
--HE SUPPORTS OUR EFFORTS TO HALT SOVIET/CUBAN
INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE AND ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA.
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ACHEAMPONG STRUCK ME AS RELAXED AND CONFIDENT. HOWEVER,
HE STILL REFLECTS AN ABYSMAL IGNORANCE OF THE SEVERITY
OF GHANA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND I DOUBT WHETHER HE
WILL FACE UP TO THEM SOON. END SUMMARY

2. I CALLED ON HEAD OF STATE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME
MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) GENERAL I.K. ACHEAMPONG ON JUNE

6, EXPLAINING THAT I WAS LEAVING IN A FEW DAYS FOR CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND WOULD BE AWAY FOR AT LEAST TWO MONTHS. I SAID THAT EVENTS IN GHANA WERE FOLLOWED IN WASHINGTON WITH GREAT INTEREST AND THAT BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACHED TO HIS VIEWS, I THOUGHT IT USEFUL TO HAVE ANOTHER OF OUR FRANK EXCHANGES BEFORE LEAVING. ACHEAMPONG GREETED ME CORDIALLY AND SAID HE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A CHAT, NOTING THAT WE HAD NOT TALKED PRIVATELY SINCE THE MARCH 30 REFERENDUM. HE URGED ME TO SEE HIM AGAIN WHEN I RETURNED FROM WASHINGTON. HE SAID HE TOO VALUED THESE EXCHANGES AND WANTED TO CONTINUE THEM FREQUENTLY. AS USUAL, HE RECEIVED ME ALONE. OUR CONVERSATION LASTED ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF AND THE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS EMERGED:

3. STATE OF U.S.-GHANAIAN RELATIONS. ACHEAMPONG EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE AS HE WAS OVERFLYING GHANA AND SAID IT WAS ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE CURRENT WARMTH OF OUR RELATIONS. I AGREED, ADDING THAT HAPPILY WE HAD NO SERIOUS BILATERAL PROBLEMS WITH ONE EXCEPTION I WANTED TO MENTION LATER (SEE PARA 6 BELOW). I OFFERED ACHEAMPONG SOME GOOD NEWS: TRAINING OF GHANAIAN MILITARY OFFICERS IN U.S. INSTITUTIONS HAS DRAMATICALLY INCREASED FROM 14 STUDENTS IN 1973 TO A CURRENT TOTAL

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OF 65. THE CHAIRMAN EXPRESSED DELIGHT AT THIS NEWS AND SAID HE ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE PROGRAM, IN PART BECAUSE HE HAD BENEFITED HIMSELF SO GREATLY FROM THE COURSE HE ATTENDED SEVERAL YEARS AGO AT FORT LEAVENWORTH.

4. USAID PROGRAMS. I BRIEFED ACHEAMPONG ON CURRENT STATUS OF OUR USAID PROGRAMS AND INFORMED HIM THAT THE 2,500 TONS OF PL 480 TITLE II FOOD AID WHICH HAD BEEN HELD IN KUMASI WAS NOW BEING DISTRIBUTED IN THE UPPER AND NORTHERN REGIONS. ACHEAMPONG EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR CURRENT AND PAST U.S. FOOD AID ASSISTANCE AND ADDED THAT THE RECENT GOOD RAINS HAD MADE HIM MUCH MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FOOD SITUATION. THE CROP OUTLOOK WAS GOOD, HE SAID, AND HE THOUGHT THE "WORST WAS OVER." I SAID OUR OWN AGRICULTURAL PEOPLE SHARED THAT VIEW. REFERRING TO GHANA'S RECENT REQUEST TO THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) FOR FOOD AID, I SAID THAT WE DO NOT PLAN TO GIVE ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY FOOD AID TO GHANA AT THIS TIME; INSTEAD, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR OWN MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO WFP WILL BE USED TO HELP MEET THIS COUNTRY'S NEEDS.

SHOULD THE FOOD SITUATION DETERIORATE LATER, I ADDED, WE WOULD OF COURSE EXAMINE SYMPATHETICALLY ANY NEW REQUESTS. ACHEAMPONG SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND REPEATED THAT HE THOUGH THE FOOD SITUATION WAS "IN GOOD SHAPE." HE HOPED GOG WOULD NOW BE ABLE TO SAVE THE HUGE AMOUNTS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE THAT IT HAS HAD TO SPEND ON FOOD IMPORTS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS.

5. PRESS ATTACKS. SEIZING UPON ACHEAMPONG'S THANKS FOR OUR AID EFFORTS HERE, I TOLD HIM THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK HARD TO ASSIST GHANA IN ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--PARTICULARLY IN THE AGRICULTURAL AREA. OUR USAID PERSONNEL ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THEIR GHANAIAAN COUNTERPARTS. WE THEREFORE FIND IT CONFIDENTIAL

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HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY WE ARE BEING ATTACKED IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED NEWSPAPERS AND ACCUSED OF TRYING TO UNDERMINE ACHEAMPONG'S GOVERNMENT AND THE VERY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WE ARE WORKING SO HARD TO SUPPORT. I THEN SHOWED HIM RECENT EXAMPLES OF OFFENDING SIGNED EDITORIALS IN GHANAIAAN TIMES (ACCRA 4534 AND PREVIOUS) CONCERNING "IMPERIALIST PROPAGANDA AGAINST GHANA'S ECONOMY" WHICH SEEMED TO BE PUSHING A SOVIET LINE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 ACCRA 4715

LONDON FOR SEITZ

I SAID WE ARE AWARE OF SMC POLICY OF GIVING EDITORS A CERTAIN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION BUT ARE DISTURBED WHEN THEIR EDITORIAL POLICIES APPEAR TO CONFLICT SO SHARPLY WITH OUR AGREED GOALS OF WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP GHANA. I SAID I WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY EXPLAINING THESE EDITORIALS IN WASHINGTON AND NOTED THAT THEY COULD ALSO DO FURTHER DAMAGE TO THE ALREADY POOR INVESTMENT CLIMATE HERE. ACHEAMPONG WAS VISIBLY ANNOYED WITH THESE EDITORIALS AND SAID HE HAD JUST CONCLUDED A MEETING OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL DURING WHICH HE HAD INSTRUCTED ARMY COMMANDER(AND ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER) MAJ. GEN. R.E.A. KOTEI "TO TAKE THE EDITOR TO TASK FOR THEM," TO EMPHASIZE THAT THEY DID NOT REFLECT GOG POLICY AND SERVED ONLY TO ADVANCE THE INTERESTS OF THE SOVIETS. (COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT OTHER SENIOR GOG OFFICIALS WERE ALSO DISTURBED BY THESE EDITORIALS, BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THEY WILL CEASE. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE EDITOR OF THE GHANAIAN TIMES, KWAME GYAWU-KYEM, SEEMS TO BE A LAW UNTO HIMSELF, AND THE GOG HAS BEEN NOTORIOUSLY UNSUCCESSFUL IN MODERATING HIS DIATRIBES AGAINST THE WEST.) ACHEAMPONG ALSO NOTED THAT THE AUTHOR OF THE EDITORIALS "WAS KNOWN TO HAVE SOVIET CONNECTIONS," A FACT HE ALSO FOUND DISTURBING AND "WOULD DEAL WITH". HE WAS EMPHATIC IN DECLARING THAT THEY DID NOT REPRESENT HIS GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS. I REMINDED ACHEAMPONG OF OUR PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND SAID THAT WE CONTINUE TO ATTACH GREAT AND FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE TO THIS SUBJECT. WHILE GHANA'S OVER-ALL HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WAS REASONABLY GOOD, I SAID WE HAD BEEN CONCERNED AT THE POST-REFERENDUM ARRESTS OF SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS, A CONCERN WHICH LED TO MY EARLIER DEMARCHE TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. I ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY OTHER INFORMATION OR EXPLANATION CONCERNING THESE DETENTIONS WHICH HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE ME. THE CHAIRMAN SAID HE WAS VERY AWARE OF OUR CONCERN IN THIS AREA, THAT HE HAD AUTHORIZED THE DETENTIONS VERY RELUCTANTLY AND ONLY BECAUSE THE SMC HAD FIRM EVIDENCE THAT THE DETAINEES WERE IN FACT PLOTTING "SABOTAGE, KIDNAPPING OF GOG

OFFICIALS" AND OTHER ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES WHICH COULD HAVE THROWN GHANA INTO CHAOS AND BLOODSHED. I ASKED ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY RELEASES OF THOSE DETAINED OR ALTERNATIVELY, THEIR BEING CHARGED AND TRIED UNDER DUE JUDICIAL PROCESS. ACHEAMPONG SAID HE HAD ALREADY RELEASED 8 OF THE 35 DETAINEES AND HOPED OTHERS MIGHT BE RELEASED SOON. THE GOG WAS REVIEWING EACH CASE CAREFULLY ON AN INDIVIDUAL

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BASIS, A TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS, BUT IT HAD TO BE CERTAIN THAT A GOOD CASE COULD BE SUSTAINED IN A COURT OF LAW BEFORE CHARGING ANY OF THEM. HE HOPED THAT SOME PRISONERS, WHOSE "SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES" WERE LESS SERIOUS, WOULD BE RELEASED AS SOON AS THEIR CASES WERE REVIEWED. I REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACHED TO THIS SUBJECT AND REMINDED THE CHAIRMAN THAT NEW LEGISLATION REQUIRED US TO DETERMINE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS IN LARGE PART ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS OF COUNTRIES CONCERNED. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS BUT HOPED WE WOULD UNDERSTAND HIS OBLIGATION TO AVOID CHAOS IN GHANA AND HIS INTENTION TO MOVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO RELEASE OR CHARGE THE DETAINEES. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS BE SENDING A GOOD-WILL DELEGATION TO BRITAIN AND THE U.S., PROBABLY HEADED BY THE CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF, LT. GEN. F.W.K. AKUFFO, TO EXPLAIN GHANA'S CURRENT SITUATION DIRECTLY TO SENIOR OFFICIALS.

7. DOMESTIC POLITICS. ACHEAMPONG SAID HE WAS GLAD TO HAVE THE REFERENDUM BEHIND HIM AND GRATIFIED AT THE RESULTS. I TOLD ACHEAMPONG WE UNDERSTOOD AND APPLAUDED HIS EFFORTS TO MOVE THE COUNTRY TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL RULE AND ASKED HOW THE PROGRAM WAS FARING. THE CHAIRMAN SAID IT WAS MOVING AHEAD ON SCHEDULE AND THAT HE WOULD ADHERE STRICTLY TO HIS TIMETABLE, LEADING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN NOVEMBER 1978, GENERAL ELECTIONS IN JUNE, 1979 AND A HAND-OVER TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN JULY, 1979. HE SAID THE RECENTLY APPOINTED CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION WAS WORKING IN EARNEST AND HE EXPRESSED GREAT REGRET THAT HIS VIGOROUS ATTEMPTS AT RECONCILIATION WITH OPPOSITION GROUPS HAD NOT BEEN COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL. HE HAD MADE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION, BUT ONLY THE CATHOLIC AND

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PROTESTANT CHURCH GROUPS HAD AGREED TO PARTICIPATE. THE BAR ASSOCIATION HAD REFUSED TO SERVE ON THE COMMISSION, AND THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, HAVING AGREED INITIALLY TO DO SO, THEN CHANGED ITS MIND. HE THOUGHT THE COMMISSION ITSELF NEVERTHELESS REFLECTED AN ADEQUATE CROSS-SECTION OF OPINION IN GHANA AND WOULD BE ABLE TO PRODUCE A VIABLE CONSTITUTION. HE SAID HE WOULD NOT TRY TO INFLUENCE ITS DELIBERATIONS BUT BELIEVED IT LIKELY THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION MIGHT WELL BE PATTERNED IN LARGE PART ON THE AMERICAN MODEL, I.E., A STRONG EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT AND A BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE. THE NATURE OF MILITARY AND POLICE PARTICIPATION WAS STILL TO BE DECIDED. HE HIMSELF

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R 091501Z JUN 78
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 ACCRA 4715

LONDON FOR SEITZ

FELT THEY SHOULD HAVE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT BUT CURRENT DELIBERATIONS MIGHT YET RESULT IN THEIR BEING LIMITED TO AN ADVISORY ROLE. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT A WORKABLE CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT WOULD RESULT IN THE END.

8. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. I ASKED WHAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN CONFRONTING GHANA'S SERIOUS ECONOMIC

PROBLEMS--TRIPLE DIGIT INFLATION, SHORTAGE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE, SMUGGLING, ETC. I SAID WE CONTINUE TO WANT TO BE HELPFUL TO GHANA BUT OUR ABILITY TO DO SO WAS LIMITED IN THE ABSENCE OF INTERNAL REFORMS, WHICH ONLY HIS GOVERNMENT COULD UNDERTAKE, HOPEFULLY WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE IMF AND IBRD. ACHEAMPONG SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS. THE GOG WAS NOW CONSIDERING VARIOUS MEASURES TO SLASH GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND TO RENEW THE FLOW INTO THE COUNTRY OF BOTH ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AND RAW MATERIALS TO ENABLE INDUSTRY

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TO RESUME PRODUCTION. (COMMENT: HE OFFERED NO DETAILS ON THE SPECIFIC STEPS TO BE TAKEN, AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DOES NOT YET FULLY UNDERSTAND THE ENORMITY OF GHANA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.) I MENTIONED THAT AMERICAN FIRMS, ALONG WITH OTHER FOREIGN FIRMS, WERE HAVING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES AND NOTED THAT BADLY NEEDED FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN GHANA WAS UNLIKELY TO BE FORTHCOMING UNTIL THESE PROBLEMS WERE CORRECTED. ACHEAMPONG SAID THAT HE WAS ALSO AWARE OF THESE PROBLEMS AND THAT THE GOG HOPED TO ACT SOON TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. AS A MATTER OF PRIORITIES, HOWEVER, HE ATTACHED GREATER PRIORITY TO RESUMING THE FLOW OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AND RAW MATERIAL IMPORTS.

9. ZAIRE/SHABA/SOVIET-CUBAN ACTIVITIES. I BRIEFED ACHEAMPONG ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SHABA, INCLUDING OUR AIRLIFT OF MOROCCAN TROOPS TO ZAIRE, AND GAVE HIM COPIES OF RECENT STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT CARTER. (MAY 25 PRESS CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO CONTAINED IN STATE 135043). ACHEAMPONG SAID HE WAS ALSO DISTURBED

BY CUBAN AND SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA. HE RECALLED PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS WE HAD HAD ON THIS SUBJECT AND SAID THE SHABA SITUATION ONLY HEIGHTENED HIS CONCERN. ALTHOUGH BECAUSE OF ITS COMMITMENTS TO THE UN FORCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST GHANA COULD NOT FURNISH TROOPS TO ZAIRE, HE APPROVED THE ACTION OF U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN NATIONS IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THAT COUNTRY, FACED AS MOBUTU WAS BY AN INVASION FROM OUTSIDE HIS BORDERS. HE SPECIFICALLY DISAGREED WITH THOSE AFRICAN LEADERS WHO CRITICIZED WESTERN ACTIONS IN ZAIRE AS "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE" AND

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SAID HE FELT STRONGLY THAT A HEAD OF STATE HAS THE RIGHT TO CALL FOR SUCH HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS WHEN HE NEEDS IT, "JUST AS I MIGHT TURN TO THE UK OR US IF I WERE FACED WITH SUCH A SITUATION." HE MADE CLEAR THAT HE STRONGLY DISTRUSTED SOVIET MOTIVES IN AFRICA, SAYING THEY CONTINUE TO PREY ON TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY WHENEVER THEY COULD. AS FAR AS GHANA WAS CONCERNED, HE SAID, "WE KNOW OUR TRUE FRIENDS ARE IN THE WEST."

10. COMMENT: ACHEAMPONG WAS IN VERY GOOD FORM. HE WAS RELAXED, CONFIDENT, FULL OF BOUNCE AND VERY PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE JUST COMPLETED TWO-WEEK VISIT BY A GROUP OF BRITISH MP'S (SEPTIL). HE SPOKE WITH GREAT CONVICTION ABOUT ADHERING TO THE TIMETABLE FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE AND, BARRING ASSASSINATION, A COUP OR COMPLETE COLLAPSE OF THE ECONOMY, IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT HE WILL DO SO. HE IS CERTAINLY AWARE OF AND CONCERNED AT OUR REACTION TO POSSIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS HERE. FURTHERMORE, AS WAS THE CASE WITH RESPECT TO THE VISITING BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, THE CHAIRMAN IS OBVIOUSLY VERY EAGER FOR A PUBLIC INDICATION OF OUR SUPPORT AND HE DESPERATELY WANTS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HE FACES AND IS TRYING TO DO. PERHAPS THE MOST DISTURBING ASPECT OF THE CONVERSATION WAS ON THE ECONOMIC SCENE. HE CONTINUES TO REFLECT AN ABYSMAL IGNORANCE OF THE ENORMITY OF THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING GHANA, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER HIS SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS AND CIVILIAN COMMISSIONERS, MANY OF WHOM DO UNDERSTAND THESE PROBLEMS, WILL BE ABLE TO GET THROUGH TO HIM.
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